

**STRUGGLE FOR LIFE IN *THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN
BUTTON* (2008) DIRECTED BY DAVID FINCHER:
AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH**



RESEARCH PAPER

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Every person has their right to be free from fear, free to decide what they want, and of course everything that they have decided is not inverted by people who have stronger power. But sometimes people cannot be free because somebody else pushes the other one in the way he or she will not be comfort, that indirectly what he or she feels is under pressure. That is why people will against that to get free no matter what they try. In their effort, they often face problems that come from the inabilities from themselves. These make them feel inferior.

Every person has ever felt to get better in his/her life even ones. This situation happens as people interacts with other people that sometimes, the stronger power innervate her or him that finally pressure results un-good feeling or uncomfortable condition into the weaker one. That is why people will try to get free no matter what he or she tries to effort as long as he or she can try to overcome.

Person's value in their lives can be seen among others from his or her personality. This suggests that every person can be distinguished, in term of human values, from others through the characteristics and qualities she or he expresses in social interaction within society. Hornby (1995: 863) assumes that: "personality means the characteristic and qualities of a person seen as a

whole". People view that the personality is a character between good and bad. Struggle is one of the manifestations of good personality provides, people turning point to achieve a certain goal in life. Struggle itself is defined as the tendency to expect the best in all things; confidence in the success of a course of action (Drever, 1958: 814).

Struggle for life is an interesting object not only for psychologist or author of novel but also for movie director. The cinema always reflects the situations that happen in the certain time in order to reveal the reality in human life. Beside that, film gives us knowledge to understand the essence of life and contributes to the understanding of the reality of life in order to be realistic. Film eventually presents the characterization that indicates frustration, excessive of inferiority feeling, and his withdrawal from social interaction. That is why there are a lot of director displaces the realism of life into film through the script. One of those directors is David Fincher who involves the struggle of life in his major character in the film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

According to the above explanation, there is a relationship between literary work and psychology. The literary work itself displaces phenomena of psychology. The problem which is usually in the literary work is the characterization which indicates frustration, excessive of inferiority feeling, his withdrawal from social interaction and his creativity in coping and solving the problems that are caused from situation around him. That is why there are a lot of directors displace the realism of life into the literary.

But David Fincher again found an answer in digital technology that was ready for Pitt's close-ups. Using sophisticated performance capture techniques, digital effects teams scanned sculpted life casts of Pitt, and then of his face as he was recording dialogue. These were entered into a 3D database, which eventually could generate age-appropriate "talking head" images that could be digitally transplanted onto the bodies of the actors who played Button at different periods.

The film was shot digitally with dual Thomson Viper FilmStream and Sony F23 CineAlta cameras using Zeiss DigiPrime and DigiZoom lenses in 4:4:4 format over a 145-day shooting schedule in New Orleans and Montreal. All slow motion photography off the continental U.S. as well as sailing scenes were shot on 35mm film. Fincher had immediate full-resolution playback on-set to check takes and adjust lighting or art direction as necessary.

The film "*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*" opens up with a tight close up of a very old woman on her deathbed in the hospital. There is a terrible storm raging outside the window. Clearly in pain, the old woman is struggling to speak and her daughter (Julia Ormond) is at her bedside. We can tell the mother is at the end of her life because when she cries out in pain and her daughter fetches the nurse, the nurse tells her that she can have as much pain medication as she wants. The daughter has come to say goodbye to her mother, but their relationship seems strained. The woman asks in a feeble voice for her daughter to bring her a diary from her belongings and to read it to her. The diary looks like a journal with tickets and photographs glued to the

pages. The daughter begins reading from the diary and it turns out to be the story of Benjamin Button.

The film cut to the end of World War I in 1918. Throughout the streets of New Orleans, people are flooding the streets in celebration. A young man (Benjamin's father), however, is rushing home to check on his wife who has just given birth. His wife appears to have hemorrhaged during childbirth and is on the brink of death. The presence of the priest who has come to give her last rites confirms this. Before she takes her last breath, she asks her husband to ensure that their child have a place in this world. Benjamin's father promises and shortly thereafter the mother expires. He approaches the crib and the attending nurse tries to warn him, but he cries out in horror when he lifts the blanket and sees his son for the first time. Benjamin's father frantically runs away and eventually stops at the porch of a large house. He hears people inside the house and then impulsively places his baby on the steps of the house and leaves whatever money he has with the baby.

This movie is interesting to study about the phenomenon of society life, there are divided into four aspects to study. The first aspect is *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie story about class struggle for life to get normal life. The film follows the adventures of Benjamin Button in New Orleans, and in the many places he travels, to tell the extraordinary tale of a not so ordinary man.

The second aspect, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is adapted from the 1920s story by F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Button" tells the story of a man

who is born in his 80s and ages backwards. Stretching from the end of World War I in 1918 into the 21st century, the film follows the adventures of Benjamin Button in New Orleans, and in the many places he travels, to tell the extraordinary tale of a not so ordinary man.

The third aspect is structural elements including: the character & characterization, theme, plot, setting, and style. The theme of the movie: to be the struggle for "human freedom" against and dictatorial society dominated by normally people. The title this movie describes that *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie though is carried out by a different exploited physically. This movie uses progressive plot (straight plot), called straight plot if event in the story walked chronologically, one event cause the next event. The last aspect is the philosophical that concerns David Fincher director conveys how human created by god have equality in life and right, everybody people struggle to get dream, change his life.

One basic reason of class struggle is economic this is happened because economic is very important thing to make level of social class in the society. Because of this, the rich people always get everything what they want and honesty as the low. Level workers fell oppressed by the normal people by class struggle, they hope can shape ownership of the capital and means of production. In order to get the exploitation out from their life, it means, they will get equal class especially in economies.

Based on the phenomenon, the writer is interested in analyzing this film by using an individual psychological approach by Alfred Adler to

disclose the struggle for life of the major character *Benjamin Button* in his personality.

B. Previous Study

Firsly, Tomi Indriarto (2007) with entitled *The Inferiority Feeling of William Wallace in Mel Gibson's Brave Heart*: an individual psychological approach. The writer emphasizes the analysis on relating the structure of the work to the large structure of the social realities in which the work was made.

Secondly, Rendry (2005) did research entitled: *The Optimism of Julia Stanford In Sidney Sheldon's Morning, Noon And Night: An Individual Approach*. The writer would like to present previous research related to an individual psychological approach with different object. Therefore this research will study about the different object in the struggle for life of Benjamin Button.

To fulfill the aim of this research and to limit this analysis, the researcher will focus on analyzing the major character Benjamin Button in David Fincher's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. It will focus on the struggle for life of Benjamin Button in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* directed by David Fincher: an individual psychological approach. From the analyzing the writer tries to find the major character acts to get better of life in social condition.

C. Limitation of the Study

This study not cover the personality of all characters, but it only focus on the one of the major character in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, Benjamin Button.

D. Problem Statement

In this study, the writer proposes a single problem statement. The major problem is how the major character's struggle for life is reflected in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie directed by David Fincher.

E. Objective of the Study

Dealing with the problem statement above, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the film based on its structural elements and technical elements by finding characters and characterizations, setting, point of view, plot, theme, *mise-en-scene*, cinematography, sound, and editing.
2. To analyze the film especially the character of Benjamin Button in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie using an individual psychological approach developed by Alfred Adler.

F. Benefit of the Study

The study is expected to be able to provide the following benefit:

1. Theoretical Benefit

This study is expected to contribute to the development of the larger body of knowledge, particularly literary studies on *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie.

2. Practical Benefit

The result of the study is expected to find out the writer's own comprehension about *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie. The study is dedicated to the development of literary study in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, especially in English Department and to give deeper understanding in literary field as the reference to the other researchers in analyzing the film that is analyzed in this research into different perspective.

G. Research Method

1. Object of the Study

The object of the study is *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie to discuss the struggle for life that is reflected in the main character's personality.

2. Type of the Study

The writer uses a library research, which employs qualitative method. The writer also applies an individual psychological approach to analyze the main characters.

3. Type of the Data and the Data Source

a. Primary Data

The primary data are taken from the texts of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie, it consists of dialogue, plot, themes, conflicts, and the whole narration, etc, which are relevant to the object of the study

b. Secondary Data

The secondary data sources are taken from some books, web sites, others literary and also other matters which support this analysis.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

The writer uses library research in collecting data, which involves several steps:

- a. Searching the script of the film from internet.
- b. Reading the script repeatedly.
- c. Marking the point in the script to make easy in analyzing it.
- d. Taking notes of important in both primary and secondary data.
- e. Classifying the data into groups according categories of elements of literary study.
- f. Selecting them by rejecting the irrelevant sources, which doesn't have important information to support the topic of the study?

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

The writer uses an individual psychological approach and applies it by using the descriptive analysis. In addition, the writer also uses the structural analysis of the work. Firstly, the data are arranged in a list of

data. Secondly, the researcher is looking for a selecting the correlation of data by using the chosen approach. Thirdly, all data from the second step are arranged. Finally, a conclusion is drawn.

H. Paper Organization

This research paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is introduction, which consists of the background of the study, previous study, problem statement, objectives of the study, benefits of the study, and paper organization. The second chapter deals with review of underlying theory involving the theory of individual psychological that will be used to analyze the data. Third chapter is a structural analysis. In this chapter, the writer explains the structural elements of the film. Fourth chapter is an individual psychological analysis. And the last chapter is conclusion and suggestion.